Chapter Five
The Twilight Zone: Transgressions of Identity

The New York opening of the *Fires in the Mirror* was cancelled owing to the riots which erupted three thousand miles away in Los Angeles. Anna Deavere Smith rushed to the Time Square to participate in a demonstration against the verdicts in the state trial of the Rodney King beating case. Smith stated: “New York closed down and I was glad when they cancelled my show. I didn’t want to be in this dark hole while it was happening. I felt this longing to have glued to the television like most of America” (Stayton 1993, 2). The nightmarish rioting and terror which started from the broadcasting of the video clippings portraying the beating of Rodney King have been assuming a new shape and dimension with the trial.

Soon after the rioting in Los Angeles stopped, Gordon Davidson, Artistic Director of the Mark Taper Forum, who was present during the premiere of *Fires in the Mirror: Crown Heights Brooklyn and Other Identities* in New York, invited Smith to come to Los Angeles to create a work that would reflect the myriad voices which raged in pain, misery
and trauma after the verdicts in Simi Valley, which acquitted four white police officers of beating Rodney King. Gordon Davidson’s decision to invite Smith to produce a work on riots, “prompted a few local artists to criticize the selection of a non-Angelino who wasn’t even in town during the incidents she would be depicting” (Shirby 1994, 50). In an effort to make some sense of the chaos in Los Angeles riots, Smith spent the rest of the year talking to the police officers, Korean shop keepers and small business men, Angelinos, Administrators and gang members trying to capture the essence of the post-riot Los Angeles.

*Twilight: Los Angeles* was originally produced by the Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles with Gordon Davidson as artistic director/producer and Emily Mann as director. Robert Brill was the set designer and Candice Donnelly the costume designer in this production. John Stolezberg of Intelerwall worked for multimedia design and Lucia Hwong as the music director. African-American playwright Thulani Davis functioned as workshop dramaturge and Jamie Lyons and Kathy Cho were the research assistants to Smith. The premiere of this production was on May 23rd 1993. It was produced for the New York Shakespeare Festival in March 1994 with George C. Wolfe as producer and director.
Redefining Race Dialogues

Smith described *Twilight: Los Angeles* as a phase in history when the city is suspense and in suspension. The title of the performance was taken from the name of a former gang member who helped to negotiate truce between two of Los Angeles’ most deadly gangs, the Crips and the Bloods. In the interview with Smith, the short, very dark skinned gang member named ‘Twilight’ spoke to Smith:

Twilight by that’s my name

When I was twelve and thirteen I stayed out until, they say

Until the sun come up ...

A lot of people said, “Well Twilight, you know,

you a lot smarter

And you have a lot more wisdom than twice your age

‘Twi’ abbreviation of the word ‘twice’ ...........

Light is a word that symbolizes knowledge

..................................................

So Twilight is that time between day and night

Limbo, I call it Limbo.

(Smith 1994, 254)

Limbo for Smith is the present state of American identity as far as her search for identity in the *On the Road: A Search for American*
Character is concerned. “To me ‘Twilight’ also implies some thinking about seeing and what we have to do to see... Twilight (the character) to see that the light as the knowledge and wisdom of the world” (1994, xxi). A critic remarked in this regard: “Twilight being between light and dark has become an explicit metaphor of Los Angeles in an undeniably translucent manner and people in Los Angeles are caught between a past we reject and a future we can’t grasp” (Proffit, Steve 1993, 3). Smith captures multiple resonances of ‘Twilight’ in Twilight: Los Angeles.

Smith highlights the speech of the ex-gang member Twilight as an example of the kind of language required for dialogue on race related issues. The story of race in its scope and complexity reinstates the fact that the contemporary race dialogue desperately needs a more complex language to signify multifaceted identities. The words of Twilight serve as an instance by which she can redefine the nature of dialogues on race so far. Smith’s project in Twilight is to rejuvenate a language capable of conducting dialogues on race, which the city of Los Angeles is presently devoid of.

Another major issue highlighted in the performance is the blurring boundaries of ethnicity especially in the context of the coexistence of people from multiple ethnic backgrounds. This issue is further
complicated with the emergence of mass media and popular culture as two important sites where ethnic boundaries are consistently negotiated. Smith considers the analysis of transgressions of racial, ethnic and gender identities "as a conceivable response to a particular culture and mainstream that denied the possibility of development of identity" (1994, xxv). Identity, "being a process towards character," it is contested and challenged at various quarters of a community (1994, xxv). Simultaneously, identities are subjected to an irreversible kind of homogenisation by popular culture in a place like Los Angeles.

In spite of multiple voices present in the community, mass media and popular culture always propagate the notion of a unified voice. During the performance of Twilight: Los Angeles, this impulse was predominantly present. In the discussion session after each performance in the Mark Taper Forum people insistently queried for a single answer or resolution to the problems performed. Many spectators expected a proper conclusion instead of multiple voices battling on the performance ground in search of identities. Smith cites a question which was frequently asked by audience after performing Twilight in this regard: "Did you find any one voice that could speak for the entire city?" This question according to Smith foregrounds an expectation that in the diverse city of Los Angeles, a unifying voice would be possible. For
Smith, this notion of a unifying voice amidst the cacophony of voices will result in the mutation of many voices.

In a Los Angeles Times interview with Smith, the interviewer remarked: “Some people have been critical of these performances, because there is no one in it who seems to have a unifying vision of Los Angeles” (Proffit 1993, 3). Smith responded rigorously to this observation by positing a question: “Do you think there is any one in Los Angeles who has that vision?” Smith responded: “When people expect from me this one answer -- some single, unifying thing -- I feel so bad, because I just don’t think that’s fully intelligent right now.... My work is about giving voice to the unheard and reiterating the voice of the heard in such a way that you question or re-examine what is the truth” (Proffitt 1993, 3). The community’s quest for a single authorial voice undermines all the voices, specifically the voices from the margins. Therefore Smith recognised the need for all voices to be at least heard or represented. “This very fact inhibits our ability to hear more voices than that are closest to us in proximity” (Smith 1994, xxv). This conviction implies that the performer cannot deny the voices she/he has heard. The voices often represented in culture and performance are privileged voices in a community. Smith’s effort is to represent voices
from margins, which are neglected by the dominant representational practices.

Smith emphasised that theatre should embrace diversity if it wants to mirror society. *Twilight: Los Angeles* like *Fires in the Mirror* and Smith’s other theatrical ventures in the *On the Road: A Search for American Character* Series, both challenge and undermine the conventional theatrical techniques to represent characters. Smith’s intention is to destabilise the very theoretical and philosophical foundations of ‘theatre’ to make it closer to the society. The performance practices of mainstream theatre in America, which are predominantly white and male centred, and the process of production of stereotypes of people of colour are instances of the limitation of contemporary theatrical representations. Representing the voices of people who had lived through the disturbances in Los Angeles in 1992 is a process geared towards this point. The whole work of *Twilight* is envisioned as a process and Smith had a “greater understanding of the limitations of theatre to reflect society” during this process of representing characters (Smith 1994, xxiii). The print version of *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* is described as a part of the quest for a “kind of theater that could be more sensitive to the events of my own time than the traditional theatre could” (1994, xxiii). This sort of
orientation towards redefining ‘theatre’ has been explicit throughout her 
*On the road: A Search for American Character* project. Hence

*Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* serves us with her lucid comprehension of
the significance of distancing and diverting performative
experimentation from insular theatrical conventions.

Understanding the broad spectrum of challenges in portraying
voices on a canvas which is wide beyond comprehension Smith
included more people to work with her during the interviews as well as
the rehearsals. “Since *Fires in the Mirror*, I have found it helpful to
include more people in the creative process. I developed *Twilight: Los
Angeles* at the Mark Taper Forum in collaboration with four other
people of various races who functioned as dramaturges”(1994, xxii).

Smith invited Dorinne Kondo, a Japanese-American anthropologist,
Osker Eustis, resident director at the Mark Taper Forum, Elizabeth
Alexander, an African-American poet and University of Chicago
Professor, and Hector Tobar, a Guatemalan-American reporter who had
covered the *Los Angeles* civil disturbances for *Los Angeles Times* to
take part as dramaturges in her interview process. Kondo, Tobar,
Elizabeth and Eustis functioned as people who offer individual
perspectives to the playwright or performer in the preparation of the
performance text. They reacted to the performance “at every stage of its
development" (Smith 1994, xxii). The dramaturges brought in their own experiences and expertise on race relations to re-map contemporary debates on race.

One of the major factors for Smith in inviting dramaturges to her work was the conviction that if she organised it alone, her own history and background as an African-American, a history and background of struggle with Whites, would make the scope of the work narrower. For an anthropologist or sociologist or performer, their position as a hearer of voices itself is determined on the basis of their own voice. For instance, people who like Smith working on race relations situate themselves and work further from a point of view of their own ethnicity. Smith’s interviews always illustrate this fact because the African-American body of Smith emerges as a significant factor during her interviews. In this sense, the attempt to include experts from different disciplines outside theatre destabilised the possibility of conventional theatrical structure in Twilight as well as accepted notions of race and representation. The result was exciting: “After every performance during the previews, I met with the dramaturges... they passionately attacked the black and white canvas that most of us in the room were inclined to perpetuate” (Smith 1994, xxiii). The staff of the Mark Taper Forum fully devoted themselves to the fulfilment of the Smith’s work.
The Taper had provided full-fledged support including transcribers, translators, dramaturges, video artists, graphic designers, costume designers, historical archivists and an eminent director, Emily Mann.

A pass to the Federal trial of the four white defendants charged with the beating of African-American motorist Rodney King and violating his civil rights was among the most coveted tickets in town. Smith was offered one to the trial. Gordon Davidson, artistic director of Mark Taper Forum, remarks in this regard: “This is not a play writing in any conventional sense. It’s a forum of anthropological, social and cultural research that comes through interviews and how those knit together” (Stayton 1993, I). Keeping in mind the complexities of performing the city of Los Angeles he described the performance of Twilight as a community conversation.

**Inside the Los Angeles Community**

The riots which exploded in Los Angeles in 1992 were among the most lethal and destructive in American history. Don Hazen, executive director of the Institute for Alternative Journalism in his foreword to *Inside the L.A Riots*, stated:

The riots were frightening and tragic but they gave expression to years of pent-up frustration and anger about decades of post urban decay, steady increase in poverty, a growing exodus of
jobs as the corporations have fled South in search of cheap labor, enormous cutbacks in every kind of government supports and exponential increase in homelessness and violence (1992, 1).

*Inside the L.A Riots* is an anthology of articles by leading independent writers and journalist to explore the realms of Los Angeles crisis darkened by mass media and government. It provides us with an alternative version, against official story which described the riots as an expression of black anger over the verdict of the Rodney King beating case which was hijacked by hard core street criminals and gangs to attack the white and business communities.

The complex cityscape of Los Angeles spans over 450 miles crossed by almost 500 miles of in-town free way. During the last few decades almost all open public spaces were barriered and transformed into covered malls, huge corporate settlements and upscale cultural enclaves. The inbred fear of the crowd is an undeniable fact in Los Angeles because the crowd is coloured in the city where whites ceased to be a majority since early eighties. “And if it is colored, city logic continues, it is poor and if poor, it must dangerous” (Cooper, M 1992, 12). The city’s attitude is different to the homeless, coloured and poor. Most of the Los Angeles benches “have been ‘bum-proofed’ usually by
making the seat round as a barrel... Timed Sprinkler systems scatter the city’s 50,000 homeless from the few remaining public lawns as well as from the door ways of Chi-chi commerce” (1992, 12). The white community by avoiding the world class parks in Los Angeles and Dockweiler beach in fear of black and Latinos used to go to distant colourful beaches and locations such as Malibu and Zuma.

Maxine Waters, a Congress woman in her Testimony Before the Senate Banking Committee on May 14, 1992 stated as follows:

The verdict in the Rodney King case did not cause what happened in Los Angeles. It was only the most recent injustice piled upon many other injustices suffered by the poor minorities and the hopeless people living in this nation’s cities. I have seen our country continually and systematically ravaged by banks who would not lend to us, by governments, which abandoned us or punished us for our poverty, and by big businesses who exported our jobs to third-world countries for cheap labour. (26)

This eventually resulted in the formation of an African American ghetto in the South Central part of Los Angeles. Hence, together with African-Americans, Latino immigrants constitute the population at
South Central Los Angeles. Korean Americans, another minority group that owns all major business firms and shopping places with the whites, constitute roughly the broad spectrum of upper class in Los Angeles.

Another significant element in the perpetuation of corporate ideology and the exclusion of African Americans and poor Latinos from the mainstream culture of Los Angeles is the Los Angeles Police Department. This department has assumed the name of the most notorious police force in U.S. The interests of the corporate sector and the business class as well as those of the white minority were well maintained by this force. The LAPD had always a banal reputation among African-Americans. The high percentage of police men from South and South-west made it particularly racist. People belonged to economically insecure communities found LAPD an oppressive force with an infamous history.

A Chronicle of the Riots

On March 3, 1991 a group of LAPD officers beat and arrested Rodney G. King for high speed motoring after a chase. George Holliday, a resident of nearby apartment, captured the beating on video tape and CNN and other networks broadcast it soon. After four days, on March 7, Rodney King was released at the district attorney's
announcement that there is not enough evidence to file criminal charges. LAPD Chief Daryl F. Gates described the Rodney King beating incident as an 'aberration' and was criticised severely by community leaders and activists. The four police officers Sergeant Stacy C. Koon and officers Laurence M. Powel, Timothy E. Wind and Theodore J. Briseno were arraigned on felony charges on March 15. Daryl Gates took disciplinary action against the four police officers charged with beating Rodney King. Timothy E. Wind who was on probation was dismissed and others were suspended. On July 23, 1991, the State Second District Court of Appeal ordered the trial of the four LAPD officers to move out of Los Angeles, and Judge Stanley M. Weisberg chose Simi Valley in Ventura County as the venue for the trial of the officers. This decision was called into question when the number of documented instances of racism in the Simi Valley was considered.

On April 29, 1991, the jury after completing the King trial returned no guilty verdicts on all charges on three officers: Timothy E. Wind, Theodore J. Briseno and Sergeant Stacey C. Koon. A mistrial was declared on one count of excessive force against Laurence M. Powell. No African-American Juror was present in the list of twelve jurors in Simi Valley. A Senior Editor of Los Angeles Weekly reported from Simi Valley just after the verdict: "Stunned silence reigns for the
first few minutes after the verdicts. Even the most hardened reporters in crowded court house media room stared each other wordlessly before running towards the entrance of Judge Stanley Weisberg’s court room… A Black woman started shouting ‘I grieve for America,…” (Martinez 1992, 30). The verdict of Judge Stanley Weisberg was aired live on T.V.

More than 2000 people crowded at the First African Methodist Episcopal Church in South Central Los Angeles where a banner was erected, which read ‘Brother, Come Help Us Stop The Madness’. The Black leaders of Los Angeles, politicians, activists and pastors spoke to the community that gathered there. Melanie Lomax, a black leader said: “I want to ask you, have you ever seen a more bankrupt jury verdict in your life?” (Martinez 1992, 31). At the same time riots erupted in many parts of the city, especially in South Central Los Angeles. Mass scale vandalism and burglary were reported by the police. A truck driver Reginald Denny was yanked from his truck and beaten unconscious on the road at the intersection of Normandy and Florence. The beating incident was captured on video from a helicopter by a group of journalists.

In South Central Los Angeles, crowds gathered and mass-scale looting occurred. “The police are nowhere in sight... kids on bikes ride
past carrying booty: Sound boards, lighting fixtures, bottles of whisky and beer, shiny new shoes.... Stacks of video. The boys said they’re overpriced, and they are the white man’s business” (Martinez 1992, 32). The major targets of the rioters were Korean business places because Koreans are a strong business community in Los Angeles. The Anti-Korean attitude was fuelled further by the reported shooting of fifteen year old Latasha Harlins, an African-American girl by Korean-American Soon Ja Du in a liquor store in South Los Angeles. During the riots crews of Korean business owners stood guard at the open windows with shotguns and pistols. Riot captured the whole city on April 30, 1992. Mayor Bradley first imposed an Emergency and then Curfew for the entire city. The authorities restricted the sale of gasoline and banned the sale of ammunition. On the same day, the Justice department announced another investigation into the possible civil rights violation in the Rodney King beating. By May 2, 1992, clean up crews and volunteers crowded the streets with trucks of food and clothing for the affected. Peter Uberroth was appointed by Los Angeles Mayor Bradley to lead the rebuilding process of Los Angeles.

Among acquittals of Reginald Denny beating case, popularly known as the “Los Angeles Four”, Damian Williams, Antonie Miller and Henry K. Watson were arrested. The fourth one, Gary William
surrendered to the police later. The three people arrested were arraigned on thirty-three charges for offences against thirteen motorists at the intersection of Florence and Normandy, the same location, where Reginald Denny was beaten. Bail set at $580,000 for Damian Williams, $500,000 Henry K. Watson and 250,000 for Miller remained unposted. Later on January 22, 1993, Supreme Court Judge John W. Ouderkirk dismissed ten charges against the defendants in Rodney King beating case excluding the charges of attempted murder. In The Federal Civil rights trial of the Rodney King beating case, officer Powell and Sergeant Koon were found guilty of violating Rodney King’s civil rights and they were sentenced to thirty months imprisonment.

The rioters aimed mainly at business establishment owned by whites and Koreans. At the end of the furious riot days, 1867 Korean businesses were looted or destroyed causing an estimated $347 million property damage. According to the Los Angeles Times reports on May 3, 1992, there were 58 deaths, 12,111 arrests and 2,383 injuries. More than 3000 business firms were damaged and as a result more than 20,000 people lost their work. The heaviest loss of Korean property occurred in Korea Town inhabited mostly by poor Latino immigrants. One of the major targets of LAPD and immigration and Natural services was illegal immigrants who allegedly have notorious roles in the riots.
The Los Angeles riots proved the complex nature of contemporary American society where the fixation on black versus white has become outdated. "The Rodney King verdict was merely the match that lit the fuse of the first multiracial class riot in American History" (Kwong 1992, 88).

The Los Angeles riots, in which people from more than two races and ethnicities were involved as victims, rioters, witnesses aggressors or commentators, raised two major issues: the multi-racial, multi-ethnic complexity of contemporary American culture and the post riot Los Angeles's difficulty in embarking on dialogues between people of different race, class and ethnicity.

**The Performance of Twilight**

Smith's commission to Los Angeles is an instance of problematising these two major issues as well as many other questions enmeshed in them. The print version of *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* consisted of forty nine characters in five portions named 'The Territory', 'Here's Nobody', 'War Zone', 'Twilight' and 'Justice'.

Smith captured rigorously the complexities of the multicultural scenario in Los Angeles by bringing in a number of people from different racial, ethnic and social backgrounds in *Twilight*. The prologue piece of *Twilight* titled 'My Enemy' is based on her interview
with a Mexican-American sculptor and painter Rudy Salas Sr. He speaks about his myriad experience as a Mexican in Los Angeles with an emphasis on the inferiority he was subjected to throughout his life.

"...first grade, they started telling me

I was inferior/ because I was Mexican.

And that's where/ I realized I had an enemy

And that enemy was those nice white teachers.

(Smith 1994, 2)

Rudy Salas's experience with 'those nice white teachers' most convincingly illustrates the white hegemony which prevailed in all fields of life in Los Angeles. Rudy Salas in appearance is a "large warm man with a blue shirt with tails out and blue jeans and tennis shirt" (Smith 1994, 2). Salas's wife Margaret was present throughout the interview, moving around the room. The moods and attitude are simultaneously expressed by gestures such as hits and taps. Salas is wearing a hearing aid in both ears so as to show that his eardrum was broken by cops kicking his head while he was a teenager in 1942. Salas interprets that physical violence of the predominantly white police men is due to their fear of minorities. "Whites are physically afraid of minorities, people of color, Blacks and Mexicans. It's a physical thing, it's a mental thing that they are physically afraid" (Smith 1994, 4). The undercurrent of hatred
and disbelief in Los Angeles is most powerfully performed by Smith through the characters of Rudy Salas.

In the second part of *Twilight* titled 'The Territory,' Smith’s effort is to portray the landscape of crisis between communities, gangs, people and police in multiple dimensions. The former president of the Los Angeles Police Commission, Stanley K. Sheinbaum cites a scene of warfare between two gangs in the Nickson Gardens Gymnasium where gang meetings were frequently conducted. The Commissioner was unexpectedly involved in the scene of truce between two gangs where hundreds of policemen lined around. He spoke to the gangsters to cool down the battle and found out the depths of the enmity between the cops and the gangs. The very next day he got a letter from one of the cops saying: “You went in and talked to our enemy” (Smith 1994, 14).

Michael Zinzum, who was a victim of Police abuse and who is at present a representative of the coalition against police abuse, further explains the inhuman nature of LAPD. He recalls the incident in which he was ruthlessly tortured and wounded by cops. As a result of his long battle against the police on the incident, the police officers were fired and he got two million dollars as compensation. He is now organizing campaigns and research against police brutality with that money. The interview with Michael Zinzum was conducted at the office of the
coalition. There is a huge white banner with an image of Black Panther and with the writing 'All power to the people' and 'Support own youth, support the truce'.

Anna Deavere Smith talked to actor Jason Sanford in the office of the Mark Taper Forum about his experience as a white man in Los Angeles. He was brought up in Santa Barbara, when there were only a few coloured people there. He had the experience of being arrested by cops but they behaved gently: "You look like an all-American white boy. You look responsible." In the police car he had a conversation with the officers about tennis. Sanford felt: "I’m sure I’m seen by the police totally different than a black man" (Smith 94, 22). The Anonymous Young man in Twilight is a former gang member living with his mother after his imprisonment. He and his brother called themselves ‘blue brothers’ and constituted a gang. The case of anonymous young man illuminates urban critic Mike Davis’s argument that the city is losing contact with its younger generation many of whom join gangs. “This is a city at war with its own children and it refuses to talk to those children. And the city doesn’t want to face these kids, or talk to its kids” (Smith 1994, 29). He insists on civil rights movements as a remedy to this crisis. The performance of characters such as Mike and anonymous
young man reveals Smith’s awareness of a sense of community in Los Angeles which is in gradual decline.

Mother Reclaiming Our Children (Mother Roc) is an organization constituted against the arrest and shooting of young men by the LAPD claiming that they are members. The Founder of Mother Roc, Theresa Allison, had lost her nephew, Tiny, in a police firing on November 29th 1991. She founded the organisation immediately after the death of her nephew. Her son and gang truce architect Dewayne Holms was picked by police several times without a warrant and released just because of the timely intervention of Mrs. Allison and others. Though working with the community organization Mother Roc and for the welfare of young people, Dewayne Holms is always under the threat of police arrest. Theresa Allison represents the anguish of all Black mothers in L.A.

Harvard Professor and author of African American History and Culture, Cornel West, relates the underlying crisis in Los Angeles and its social, political and economical background to capitalist colonisation and the emergence of corporate ideology. West’s brilliant observations bring into focus America’s international political image as a gun fighter and the frontier myth in America. “On the one hand there is duh frontier myth in America, right? that we gain some moral and political
regeneration and expansion by means of conquest and dispossession of
duh People’ s land.... If in fact our major myth is that of the frontier, the
way in which you expand the frontier is by being a gun fighter” (Smith
1994, 42). For Cornel West, American political policies on their
grabbing markets in the third world and conquering land by
subordinating natives have a ‘deep Machismo ethic’. This Machismo
ethic is gangsterous. West goes on to say that gangsterism has a deep
impact on contemporary popular culture. For instance, Sylvester Stallion
films and gangster rap are, though resistant of racism, centred on
machismo identity. The gang culture in Los Angeles captured not only
black boys but the cops too. Cops many times behave like a gang and
young people constitute gangs for self-protection. Cornel West’s
investigation into the complexities of racial hatred and gang cultures
suggests that there is something ‘gangstereous’ deeply embedded in
contemporary American Culture.

The second part of Twilight: Los Angeles, ‘Here’s nobody’ deals
with the events associated with the Rodney King beating and the
immediate responses of people related to Rodney King and the incident.
Angela King, aunt of Rodney King, was the closest relative of Rodney
King whom Smith could interview.
Mrs. King reveals the bitterest experience she had when her brother's son Rodney was beaten by police and her conviction to fight for justice: "I wanted justice; and I wanted whatever than things had comin' to them done to them, regardless you can call it revenge or what ever..." (Smith 1994, 57). In the video of Rodney King beating, she heard him 'holler' while the interpretation of the police was that they were just arresting him for high-speed motoring.

Experts found that the four officers "systematically fractured King's cranium, ankles and arms and they targetted his kidneys for dozens of blows from their two-foot long solid aluminium Monadnock PR-24 batons" (Cooper, 1992, 12). This argument is further stressed by the following character who gives an 'authoritative' response from the police official Sergeant Charles Duke, a member of the special weapons and tactics unit of LAPD. He explains the correct way to beat a victim into submission with the baton: "Powell holds the baton like this and that is not a good... The proper way of holding the baton is like this...Powell was ineffective with the baton" (Smith, 1994, 61).

The television perpetuated the video image of Rodney King in suffering in a very special, ideologically charged way. The Black bodies in pain and struggle have been dramatised and presented as a spectacle in American society for centuries. The Rodney King beating scene was
recorded in the video news as another instance of the process of presenting black bodies in suffering as a spectacle. Elizabeth Alexander in her illuminating study of Rodney King beating video, remarked that the Black bodies on mass media have become a site on which national trauma-sexual harassment, date rape, drug abuse, racial and economic urban conflict, AIDS – has been dramatised.” (1994, 92). Contemporary mass media provided us with many instances of such dramatisation of black bodies in suffering. Clarence Thomas senate-hearings, like Tyson’s rape trial and Magic Johnson’s press conference, are such instances.

“We have to stay here and watch because this is wrong,” said Josie Morales who bore witness to the beating scene from the apartment A6 of the same building from where the video was shot. She contacted the City of Los Angeles' prosecutor Terry White to offer her witness to the court. But she was never called to the Simi Valley trial. In exploring the mysteries and complexities of Simi Valley trial, Smith introduced on the stage an anonymous man who was a juror in Simi Valley. The juror was crying while describing the horrors he encountered after the controversial verdict in Simi Valley. After the verdict, when the police led the jurors to a bullet proof bus with their face covered, a news reporter asked: “Why are you hiding your faces in shame? Do you know
that buildings are burning in South Los Angeles because of you? “ He believes that a juror cannot act differently within the system of American justice. The name and address of the jurors were given to the media immediately after the verdict and they were humiliated and called white racists by the media and the mass. The most insulting moment was that he got a letter from KKK saying “ We support you, and if you need our help, if you want to join our organization we’d welcome you into our fold” (Smith 1992, 71-73). The juror raises doubts about the notion of justice in American legal system.

The next part of Twilight is titled as ‘War Zone’, which gives a distinct picture of Los Angeles riots and its victims. Immediately after the riots the Korean American community in Los Angeles constituted a victim association to support Korean shop keepers and businessmen who were looted or destroyed during the riots. Appliance store owner Richard Kim, truck driver Reginald Denny, gunshot victim and businessman Walter Park and his family are some of the victimised people represented by Smith in this part.

The emergence of Korean-American community was a direct consequence of the Korean war of the fifties. Millions of refugees flooded the cities of South Korea. Their next generation who were professionally qualified migrated to the U.S. when U.S. immigration law
was liberalised for professionals in 1965. The Korean-American community was suffering the severest threat ever in their history in the US during the riots of 1992. As a result of the riots, hundreds of Korean merchants reached the relief centres set up in Korea town by the government, Radio Korea and Oriental Mission Church. The Korean business folks gathered were particularly eager to know whether they are eligible for disaster loans from the Small Business Administration to maintain an income. The Korea town was considered a high risk area even before the riots and hence many of the business firms were not insured. “Only 500 of the 1867 Korean businesses destroyed by the riots had any coverage at all.” (Kwong, 1992, 89). Over 3000 Korean-Americans held a march at Ardmore Park in Korea Town to show their solidarity. “They blamed the police and not the looters – for failing to protect Korean businesses in the crucial early hours of the riots. (1992, 91). They called for justice for Rodney King and avoided their confrontational stance against the Blacks.

Chung Lee, the president of the Korean-American Victim’s Association spoke to Smith in Korean language and his son was translating. In the print version of Twilight, English Translation is given after each sentence. Lee’s store was completely looted and the whole store was burnt during the riots. Richard Kim, a Korean-American man
in his thirties who owned an electronic store owner fired at the riot to protect his store.

The Park family is among the most miserable victims of the riots. Smith captured the horror of being a riot victim in her performance of Walter Park, Cris Oh and June Park. Walter Park, who has had a gunshot through the eye was interviewed at their modern house in Fullerton. June Park and her son (Walter Stepson) are sitting nearby; piano music of Revels‘ ‘Death of the Princes’ is playing on a stereo system. Mr. Park speaks in “the rhythm of a person who has full authority and ease, and a person who has all of the facts exactly straight. When he begins talking, his wife and son shake their heads to let me know that he doesn’t know the answer to the question” (Smith 1994, 142). He is sitting with his arms crossed and legs crossed, easy, but in a very authoritative and confident state.

Chris Oh explained the way his father was shot: “It was an Afro-American who shot him. A man . . . . The gunman when he was at the stop light, the gunman came up to the car and broke the drivers side window and uh, it wasn’t one of those distant shots it was a close range, almost execution style” (Smith 1994, 142). The victimised Koreans were
forced to look beyond their storefronts to society’s indifference to the massive destruction which took place during the riots.

Scapegoated in an essentially Black and White and class issue, Korean-Americans are even more angry at white institutions: the media, the police and the politicians. This is mainly due to the case of Soon Ja Du, a grocer who was sentenced for the videotaped killing of fifteen year old black teenager Latazha Harlins. The sentence came out two days after the Rodney King beating incident. The media repeatedly showed clippings of Soon Ja Du shooting Latazha juxtaposed with the police beating of Rodrey King. This intensifies the feeling of Korean-Americans that they are marked intentionally for violence. The frequently broadcast scenes of gun-wielding Korean-American merchants firing on predominantly African-American rioters and looters reinforced this fear. Korean-American characters in Twilight represent the helplessness of a community between Black rage and white power. During the riots, the white fury was enraged with the assault of Reginald Denny and the scene videotaped from a helicopter was frequently broadcast by the television channels.

Reginald Denny drove his eighteen wheeler truck into the middle of the lethal mayhem during riots. The T.V crews frantically portrayed
an attempted murder when a gang of rioters had beaten Denny down the truck. "One man yanked Denny from his cab, two others kicked and stomped him as he lay helpless on the asphalt. Finally a third man grabbed the fire extinguisher from his truck and crashed it down upon Denny's skull. While he lay on the ground, another man came up to him and slowly went through his pockets, fleeing with Denny's wallet" (Cooper, Mark 1992, 43). Reginald Denny was interviewed by Smith in the office of Johnnie Cochran, Denny’s lawyer, on a May morning 1993. Denny was wearing a baseball hat and T-shirt. One of his friends was with him with a little girl. Cochran’s assistant, an attorney, sat in on the interview. During the interview, Denny recalled in detail the whole event including his trip to Inglewood. He was trapped among rioters at the intersection of Florence and Normandy. Just in front of him there was a truck full of medical supplies to Daniel Freeman Hospital: “I found later / the truck in front of me / medical supplies going to Daniel Freeman! / kind of an / ironic thing” (Smith1994, 104). He was smacked with an oxygen cylinder from the medical supply truck.

During the assault by rioters, Titus, Bobbey Tersy and Lee were the four people who came to rescue him. Denny half alive was admitted to the Daniel Freeman hospital after the beating incident. In the semi-
awakened position in the hospital he found so many important figures visiting the hospital to meet him.

Denny saw *Twilight* on 20 June 1993 with his ex-wife and daughter. It was his first visit to Music Centre downtown and his first experience in live theatre. After the performance, Denny reportedly commented: "(The character) was so much like me, it was unnerving... it took me thirty-some years to develop those mannerisms, and she learned them in a few months" (Haithman 1993:3). The insolent humour in the play amused him and the dispassionate words of Charls Duke shocked him. "What it did for me, ... was it let us see the part of the picture that we weren't aware of" (Haithman 1993, 3). Reginald Denny episode stood as the central piece in the New York Public Theatre production of *Twilight* when it was performed immediately after the intermission.

Judith Tur, ground reporter for Los Angeles News Service, gave Smith the famous video of the Reginald Denny beating taken by John and Marika Tur from their helicopter above Florence and Normandy. She described each and every part of the video to Smith. In the video, Denny is beaten down from the truck like a "sack of potatoes" (Smith 94, 95). The Los Angeles News Service reporter John Tur was reporting
in a faint voice from the helicopter throughout the video about what is happening down. Judith fast-forwarded and rewound the tape occasionally to highlight certain aspects of the video.

The ‘War Zone’ part of *Twilight* portraying the horror and mayhem of the riot scenes in Los Angeles. Smith’s impersonation of Tom Bradley, Mayor of Los Angeles, reinstates the charges raised against the administration. In the ‘War Zone’, the character of Daryl Gates, the controversial chief of Los Angeles Police Department, performed by Smith throws light upon the inertia of Los Angeles administration during the riots. Mayor Tom Bradley was interviewed by Smith at his office at City Hall. Brisk and energetic, Bradley has long legs and he sat with his legs outstretched. He spoke to Smith about four different messages he wanted to air after the verdict one or the other. The message actually sent to the media after the verdict expressed the Mayor’s outrage at the verdict. According to Bradley the message was meant “to say to people we’ve come too far to make changes and to make progress. Let us not kill that effort by reaching with violence” (Smith 94, 84). The response in cold voice to the rageful rioters didn’t make any impact at all.
Daryl Gates, the chief of LAPD talked to Smith in a Lounge at the radio station where he conducts his talk shows after his retirement. He has a good physique and he wore a tight fitting golf T-shirt and jeans. He began with the controversial fund raiser party which he was allegedly attending when the riots broke out. The party Gates participated in was a party of his supporters opposing ‘proposition F’. In a poll taken by a group called Legitimate Pollster, he was elected as the most credible individual in California and on the day of Rodney King beating, he was declared a national hero for his service against drugs.

Elvira Evers, general worker and cashier in Canteen corporation, was accidentally shot in her house by a rioter’s stray bullet while she was pregnant. The bullet passed through her placenta but the embryo remained unharmed miraculously. After the gunfire, she covered her wound with her gown not to disturb her children and then drove to the hospital. She had an emergency caesarean there and was delivered of a daughter with a bullet lodged in her elbow. During her interview with Smith, Nella, Evers’s daughter was with her grabbing their attention.

To capture the feeling of people of other ethnic backgrounds living in Los Angeles, Smith interviewed Julio Menjivar, and Elsalvadorian working as a lumber salesman and driver. When riots
spread all over Los Angeles, the National Guards mainly consisted of white and black men. Menjivar illustrates how minority communities have become victims during the riots. Hundreds of jeeps and trucks came to an intersection where people, mainly minorities gathered peacefully and threw themselves on the ground to arrest them en-mass. Julio, with others was arrested, hand-cuffed and brought to the station. They were forced to sit on their knees for two hours. The question how the minorities such as Hispanics, Koreans and Chinese confronted the riots was tackled by Smith by performing representative people from various ethnic groups and communities. This attempt completes the circle of horror, trauma and misery.

Amidst the voices of suffering and pain, Smith occasionally brought in people such as Katie Miller, a woman of huge stature speaking rapidly in a high volume and with thrust. Her speech patterns as well as her observations bring out another picture of the burning and looting in Korea town. According to Miller, the Korean merchants have never shown respect to the poor black people from the neighbourhoods.

The Godzilla episode by a Hollywood real estate agent Elian Young systematically appropriates the panic of the business class during the riots. The Hollywood agent illustrates the trauma of the riot days in
Beverly Hills area; a busy centre of Hollywood film industry, through a myth of terror: Godzilla. The vision of all these “yuppies / and ageing or aged yuppies / Armani suits, / and you know fleeing like / wild eyed . . . / All you needed was Godzilla behind them.” She quoted a letter she got after her interview appeared in T.V: “To Mrs. Yong / You are really an ass whole . . . talking about having fun during the riot days at the polo Lounge . . . You’re an embarrassment” (Smith194, 155). The riots, for the elite business class, were a nightmare to which they had to wake up. The riot happened dismantling their authority and assuming control over the Los Angeles world.

Smith performed Elaine Young by wearing huge spectacles and imitating highly italicised speech pattern. Young almost ignoring the key issues such as the beating, the verdict and the three day riots has almost become an anti-thesis to another character, Henry ‘Keith’ Watson, who was performed only in the New York version of Twilight. The Nation reviewer of Twilight comments: “Young serves to represent one extreme of social blindness in Twilight: Los Angeles, as localized in (but not confined to) Beverely Hills. Henry ‘Keith’ Watson might be said to represent the south-central counterpart.” Watson was accused of beating Reginald Denny from his cab during riots and Smith was able to get his interview only later, after the Los Angeles première.
Congress woman of 35 district, Maxine Water’s interview was taken from a speech delivered at the first African Methodist Episcopal Church. She is from the South-Central part of Los Angeles, the centre of the riot storms. She spoke about the Kerner commission report which documented the horror of African-American’s life. She points out the crisis of black youth and children. She declared that the riot “is the voice of the unheard” (Smith 1994, 162). The second piece by Maxine Waters is originally an interview given to Smith in her office in Los Angeles in the winter of 1993. In the interview, she revealed a story of a congressional meeting which she had attended without an invitation. She spoke straight to the president about the black life in U.S. and concluded: “This country is falling apart” (1994, 169). Maxine Waters’ words in Anna Deavere Smith’s performance are illuminated by her rigorous work for African-Americans among whom unemployment is 40-50% and poverty rate is 32.9%. Waters emphasised in her ‘Testimony’ that “20% of the city’s 16 to 19 year olds – are both out of school and unemployed” (1994, 26). Waters’s observations throw light upon the social and economic causes of Los Angeles unrest from the point of view of African-Americans.

These arguments are further emphasised by Paul Parker, Chairperson of Free the Los Angeles Four Plus Defence Committee.
which worked for the people involved in the Reginald Denny beating case. His brother was one among those accused of attempted murder of Denny with gunshots and by blowing up a gas cylinder. His brother was portrayed as a known gang member and underground drug dealer by the media after the beating case. He claims that Reginald Denny was projected as a victim of Los Angeles riots just because he was white: “Because Denny is white, / that’s the bottom line. If Denny was Latino, Indian or black, they wouldn’t give a damn, they would not give a damn./ Because / many people got beat, but you didn’t hear about the Lopez or the Vaccas or the, uh, Quintanas . . . ” (Smith 1993, 172). Paul Parker quit his job to begin a campaign against the demoralisation of his brother by the mass media.

The last but one part of Twilight is titled as ‘Twilight’ which includes Los Angeles Theatre Festival director Peter Sellars, Movie Producer Paula Weistein, Former Editor of Los Angeles Times, Otis Chandler, Former head of the Black Panther Party Elaine Brown and critic and scholar Homi Bhabha. Peter Sellars was interviewed on one Sunday in February 1993 at the Pacific Dining Car Restaurant. Sellars approaches the present crisis in American society with utopian perspective and laments the distortion of the great American dream.
Homi Bhabha was interviewed through telephone. He was in England and what’s most remarkable in Smith’s presentation is the British accent of Bhabha, a Parsee of Indian origin. “It’s the moment of ambivalence and ambiguity,” says Bhabha. For him, the twilight forces us to see the “intersections of the event with a number of other things that day light obscures for us” (1994, 232-233).

The last part ‘Justice’ portrays people such as Mrs. Young-Soon Han, Gladis Sibriln and the Twilight Bey. Young-Soon Han was a liquor store owner who had lost her store in the riots. Her episode is titled as ‘Swallowing the Bitterness.’ Smith presented Mrs. Han with her hair pulled back and with tears in eyes. “Until last year I believed America is the best,” says Han. When she and many other Korean merchants lost their properties, police was busy cordoning off Beverly Hills, a place of white aristocrats. She spoke to Smith hitting her hand on the glass coffee table in front of the Korean style sofa. Two Korean-American students from UCLA bore witness to the interview. Han feels that the black people found some justice somewhere with the final verdict.

The performance ends up with an interview with the organiser of grand gang truce, Twilight Bey. The ‘Twi’ in his name is from twilight.
and ‘light’ is for knowledge. Twilight Bey’s character gives the whole performance an aura of hope and optimism. “To be a true human being, I can’t forever dwell in darkness. I can’t forever dwell in the idea, of just identifying with people like me and understanding me and mine” (Smith1994, 255).

The performance of Twilight is a collaborative work that destabilises the bipolar foundations of contemporary investigations on race. The seminality of a multiracial framework enbroadened by incorporating the perspectives of people from different racial and ethnic background posits challenges to the discourse on race centring on the Black/White binary.

Dorinne Kondo, one of the dramaturges of Twilight expresses the significance of collaborative efforts on race-matters: “The contentious tensions and Utopian promises of that collaboration high lighted for me the necessity for more such attempts in the theatre, in the academy, in political activism, that might assume and surpass forms we call dialogue, collaboration, coalition, identification” (Kondo 2000, 85). Twilight throws light upon the limitations of present day debates on racial and ethnic identities which rely on the Black/White binary. Anna Deavere Smith’s attempt in Twilight is to cross the boundaries of
imagination of race by focusing on the inward complexities of a
community.

Smith defines the whole project of *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* as
“the first and foremost document of what an actress heard in Los
Angeles” (1993, xxiv). This document on the intricate web of race
relations embarks on incorporating as many people as possible to speak
on race. “I believe that we are at a stage at which we must first break
the silence about race and encourage many more people to participate in
the dialogue” (1993, xxiv). The project dismantles the conventional ways
of looking into a community and its problems because of the shifting
emphasis on race the debates attached to it. The very notion of ‘race’ is
subjected to serious reconstruction and redefinition.

The *Twilight: Los Angeles 1992* threw light up on the invisible
racial and ethnic minorities who were not represented in culture or
represented as stereotypes at the margins. The riots itself was an
instance of inscribing the unheard voices in the public sphere of Los
Angeles. Smith’s *Twilight* project problematises ‘visibility/invisibility’
as structure and mediated by systems of power. The invisibility of
Whites specifically ensures a position of power and privilege. But
invisibility for other racial and ethnic groups, signifies marginalisation.
The *Twilight* re-examines the problem of visibility/invisibility in representation as inextricably blended with marginalisation, appropriation, and subjectification and legitimised by a state of cultural hegemony.